



# *APRA Statement of Ethics*

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Association of Professional Researchers for Advancement (APRA) members shall support and further the individual's fundamental right to privacy and protect the confidential information of their institutions. APRA members are committed to the ethical collection and use of information. Members shall follow all applicable national, state, and local laws, as well as institutional policies, governing the collection, use, maintenance, and dissemination of information in the pursuit of the missions of their institutions.

## **Code of Ethics**

Advancement researchers must balance an individual's right to privacy with the needs of their institutions to collect, analyze, record, maintain, use, and disseminate information. This balance is not always easy to maintain. To guide researchers, the following ethical principles apply:

### **I. Fundamental Principles**

#### **A. Confidentiality**

Confidential information about constituents (donors and non-donors), as well as confidential information of the institutions in oral form or on electronic, magnetic, or print media are protected in order to foster a trusting relationship between the constituent and the institution. This means that the information is not available for anyone except development professionals, and their agents, to see.

#### **B. Accuracy**

Advancement researchers shall record all data accurately. Such information shall include attribution. Data analyses and their by-products should be without personal prejudices or biases.

#### **C. Relevance**

Advancement researchers shall seek and record only information that is relevant to the cultivation, solicitation, and/or stewardship strategy with the prospect.

#### **D. Self-responsibility**

Advancement researchers often play a significant role in developing and monitoring advancement department policies on information storage and confidentiality. It is important that advancement researchers lead by example. First, advancement researchers should develop clear policies and procedures for the prospect research department on the collection, storage, and distribution of constituent information and analysis. Second, when possible, advancement researchers should advocate for the development and adoption of institution wide ethics guidelines and privacy policies which are at least as complete as the APRA Statement of Ethics.

#### **E. Honesty**

Advancement researchers shall be truthful with regard to their identities and purpose, and the identity of their institutions during the course of their work.

## **F. Conflict of Interest**

Advancement researchers should be careful to avoid conflicts of interest. Prospect research consultants should have explicit policies which outline how they will deal with conflicts of interest between clients. Advancement researchers who are employed full-time for an institution and also perform consulting services should be certain that the consulting services do not represent a conflict of interest with their primary employer.

## **II. Standards of Practice**

### **A. Collection**

1. The collection of information should be done lawfully, respecting applicable laws and institutional policies.
2. Advancement researchers should be experts on the reliability of sources (print, electronic, and otherwise), as well as the sources utilized by third parties to gather information on their behalf.
3. Advancement researchers should not evade or avoid questions about their affiliations or purpose when requesting information in person, over the phone, electronically, or in writing. It is recommended that requests for public information be made on institutional stationery and that these requests clearly identify the requestor.
4. Advancement researchers should use the usual and customary methods of payment or reimbursement for products or services purchased on behalf of their institutions.
5. Advancement researchers who are employed full-time for an institution and also perform consulting services should develop clear understandings with their primary employers about the use of the employers financial and human resources.

### **B. Recording and Maintenance**

1. Advancement researchers shall present information in an objective and factual manner; note attribution, and clearly identify information which is conjecture or analysis. Where there is conflicting information, advancement researchers should objectively present the multiple versions and state any reason for preferring one version over another.
2. Advancement researchers should develop security measures to protect the constituent information to which they have access from access by unauthorized persons. When possible, these measures should include locking offices and/or file cabinets and secure and frequently changed passwords to electronic databases. Advancement researchers should also advocate institution-wide policies which promote the careful handling of constituent information so that constituent privacy is protected. The use of constituent databases over a wireless Internet connection is not recommended.
3. Where advancement researchers are also responsible for donor giving records and their maintenance, they should develop security measures to provide very limited access to the giving records of anonymous donors. Access to these records should be limited to only those staff who need the information to successfully cultivate, solicit, or steward said donor.

4. Where there is no existing case law which outlines clearly the rights of a donor in accessing advancement files (paper and/or electronic), advancement researchers should work with their institutions legal counsel to develop an institution specific policy regarding this access. This policy should be put in writing, approved by the President/CEO, and distributed to any advancement professionals who might field a request for such access.
5. When electronic or paper documents pertaining to constituents must be disposed, they should be disposed in a fashion which lessens the danger of a privacy breach. Shredding of paper documents is recommended.

### **C. Use and Distribution**

1. Researchers shall adhere to all applicable laws, as well as to institutional policies, regarding the use and distribution of confidential constituent information. Careful consideration should be given to the use of electronic mail and faxes for the delivery of constituent information.
2. Constituent information is the property of the institution for which it was collected and shall not be given to persons other than those who are involved with the cultivation or solicitation effort or those who need that information in the performance of their duties for that institution.
3. Constituent information for one institution shall not be taken to another institution.
4. Research documents containing constituent information that is to be used outside research offices shall be clearly marked \*confidential.\*
5. Vendors, consultants, and other external entities shall understand and agree to comply with the institution's confidentiality policies before gaining access to institutional data.
6. Advancement researchers, with the assistance of institutional counsel and the advancement chief officer, should develop policies which address the sharing of directory information on their constituents with other institutions. Constituent requests to withhold directory information should be respected in all cases.

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